

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2839

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 2396

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ID

SUBJ: BECAK DRIVERS DEMONSTRATE IN MEDAN

REF: MEDAN 0077

FOL TEL SENT JAKARTA FEB 23, 76 FM MEDAN REPT'D FOR UR ACTION QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEDAN 0077

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: BECAK DRIVERS DEMONSTRATE IN MEDAN

1. ON SUNDAY, 22 FEBRUARY, NEW CITY REGULATIONS CAME INTO FORCE WHICH RESTRICT PEDALLED BECAKS FROM ENTERING THE CENTER OF THE CITY FROM 0500 HOURS TO 2200 HOURS. DURING THOSE HOURS, ONLY MOTORIZED BECAKS MAY ENTER THE AREA BORDERED BY JALANS BINJEL, THAMRIN, ISKANDAR MUDA AND SUDIRMAN. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THIS REGULATION WILL AFFECT THE LIVELIHOOD OF MORE THAN 30,000 BECAK DRIVERS. AT THE SAME TIME, ANOTHER REGULATION CAME INTO EFFECT MAKING MOST OF OF THE MAJOR STREETS IN THE CENTRAL CITY ONE-WAY. TODAY IS FIRST WORKDAY UNDER NEW REGULATIONS AND TRAFFIC/TRANSPORTATION CHAOS HAS RESULTED.

2. PRESS REPORTED THIS MORNING THAT DRIVERS OF PEDAL BECAKS NUMBERING

SEVERAL HUNDRED HELD DEMONSTRATION LAST NIGHT IN FRONT OF MAYOR'S

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RESIDENCE. DEMONSTRATION IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN DISPERSED BY

TRAFFIC POLICE WITH NO UNTOWARD INCIDENTS OCCURING.

3. THIS MORNING BETWEEN 1000 AND 1130 HOURS, SEVERAL THOUSAND DRIVERS OF PEDAL BECAKS ENTERED THE RESTRICTED AREA ON THEIR BECAKS AND DEMONSTRATED AT THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE GOVERNOR. THEY THEN WENT ON TO DEMONSTRATE AT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE STOPPING OFF IN FRONT OF KOWILHAN I HEADQUARTERS ENROUTE.

ONE REPORT SAYS THAT

ARMY TROOPS FIRED SEVERAL SHOTS THERE AND THAT THREE BECAK DRIVERS WERE INJURED. WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM THIS. THE DEMONSTRATORS THEN MOVED ON TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE WHERE THEY WERE AGAIN MET BY ARMED TROOPS. ALSO, THE ARMY HAD BROUGHT IN ARMORED CARS TO PROTECT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE. AFTER A ROCK BATTLE IN JL. A. YANI, THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE AGAIN DISPERSED. THE STREETS AROUND THE MAYOR'S OFFICE ARE NOW LITTERED WITH LARGE STONES, BRICKS, STICKS AND BROKEN GLASS, AND THE TROOPS ARE STILL ON GUARD. A LARGE CROWD OF SPECTATORS IS STILL IN THE AREA. IN OTHER PARTS OF TOWN, INDIVIDUAL BECAK DRIVERS ARE BREAKING BOTTLES ON THE STREETS AND MANY PLACES ARE COVERED WITH GLASS. MOST SHOPS IN THE AREA HAVE BEEN CLOSED.

4. ANOTHER POSSIBLE SOURCE OF VIOLENCE LIES IN FACT THAT MANY DRIVERS OF PEDAL BECAKS ARE NOW LYING IN WAIT OUTSIDE THE RESTRICTED AREA AND STOPPING MOTORIZED BECAKS BRINGING PASSENGERS OUT OF THE CENTRAL CITY. THEY DEMAND THAT THE PASSENGERS TRANSFER TO A PEDALLED BECAK AND THAT THE DRIVER OF THE MOTORIZED BECAK SPLIT THE FARE THAT HAD BEEN AGREED UPON. THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY MAY VERY WELL INCREASE, ESPECIALLY AFTER DARK WHEN IT IS LESS LIKELY TO BE OBSERVED BY THE POLICE OR TROOPS WHO ARE NOW SCATTERED ALL OVER TOWN.

5. SINCE THERE IS A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF MOTORIZED BECAKS IN MEDAN, THE CENTRAL CITY IS TODAY WITHOUT ADEQUATE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. MANY PEOPLE ARE WALKING WHEN THEY WOULD HAVE RIDDEN, INCLUDING MANY SCHOOLCHILDREN. ADDED TO THE GENERAL FRUSTRATION CREATED BY THE BECAK RESTRICTIONS IS THAT CAUSED BY THE CONFUSION OF THE NEW ONE-WAY STREETS. THOSE FORTUNATE PEOPLE WITH THEIR OWN MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION FIND IT TAKING TWICE AS LONG TO REACH THEIR DESTINATION

BECAUSE OF REPROGRAMMED TRAFFIC PATTERNS.

6. NEITHER THE MAYOR NOR THE GOVERNOR IS NOW IN MEDAN. MAYOR SALEH
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ARIFIN HAS GONE TO JAKARTA AND TAIWAN ON A TOUR OF CINL PLANNING PROJECTS. THE GOVERNOR WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE RETURNED TO MEDAN OVER THE WEEKEND, BUT HIS OFFICE NOW SAYS IT DOES NOT KNOW WHEN HE WILL RETURN. SEVERAL OF OUR INDONESIAN CONTACTS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THESE TWO WORTHIES DELIBERATELY SKIPPED TOWN TO AVOID THE TROUBLES THEY KNEW WERE COMING. THIS WOULD BE IN CHARACTER FOR BOTH.

7. WILL REPORT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS. DANGER EXISTS THAT IF POLICE/
MILITARY DO NOT COME DOWN HARD ON DEMONSTRATIONS, THEN MOB ACTION
MIGHT TAKE AN ANTI-CHINESE TURN. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS HISTORY IN
MEDAN OF PEOPLE TAKING OUT THEIR FRUSTRATIONS ON CHINESE. MUST ADD
THAT THERE IS NO SIGN OF THIS AS YET. AT THIS POINT, WE BELIEVE
THINGS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO GET OUT OF HAND. MUCH MORE LIKELY
WE SEE A FEW DAYS OF TENSION, A GRADUAL SETTLING DOWN FOLLOWED BY
A TACIT AGREEMENT TO BEND THE NEW REGULATIONS AND A PARTIAL RETURN
TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE.
KILPATRICK UNQTE
NEWSOM

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